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ABSTRACT

This document reports on articulation and transfer in the University and Community College System of Nevada (UCCSN). In 1996, the Board of Regents of UCCSN established guidelines for facilitating transfer students in the transfer process and encouraging completion of an associate's degree. The policy states: (1) that all campuses will enact institution-to-institution agreements that provide completion of an associate's degree; (2) all students who have attained an associate's degree will receive admission at junior status; (3) associate's degree attainment automatically fulfills all University of Nevada, Las Vegas (UNLV) and University of Nevada, Reno (UNR) general education requirements; (4) reverse transfer agreements will be made if lower-division courses required by the major are not offered by the community college; and (5) transfer students will be able to complete bachelor's degrees in the same time as native UNR or UNLV students. This report presents data since initiation of these guidelines. Findings from fall of 1997 data show that a significant percentage of undergraduates at Nevada universities previously completed coursework at Nevada community colleges. Approximately 55% of seniors at UNR have transfer credit, and 44% of seniors at UNLV have transfer credit. This document also discusses major-to-major contracts being written between institutions, specifically curricular changes in communication, models that work, course levels, and transfer GPA. (CJW)

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REPORT ON ARTICULATION AND TRANSFER



University and Community College System of Nevada
Office of the Chancellor
March, 1998

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REPORT ON ARTICULATION AND TRANSFER
University and Community College System of Nevada
Board of Regents
March 1998

In April 1996, the Board of Regents approved a Transfer Initiative designed to facilitate the transfer of students within the University and Community College System of Nevada (UCCSN). Six major goals were established to improve the ability of students who start their coursework at a community college to transfer successfully into one of the two universities. This report reviews progress to date in meeting the Regents' goals and deadlines, and proposes new initiatives and practices to improve transfer ease for students. First, a look at the fall 1997 enrollment data describes the current number of transfer students on our campuses.

TRANSFER STUDENTS

A high percentage of UCCSN students today take courses from multiple institutions while completing a baccalaureate degree. These student numbers include those who began their coursework at a community college and have transferred to the university as well as students enrolled in the university, but concurrently taking classes at a community college. Examination of exact patterns of matriculation will not be possible until the system data warehouse is operational in fall 1998.

In fall 1997, the following numbers of students at each university had credit from a community college within the system:

FALL 1997 UNR UNDERGRADUATE STUDENTS
WITH TRANSFER CREDIT FROM UCCSN COMMUNITY COLLEGES*
(Headcount)

COMMUNITY COLLEGE	UNR FRESHMEN	UNR SOPHOMORES	UNR JUNIORS	UNR SENIORS	TOTAL
CCSN	27	53	47	63	190
GBC	25	48	49	59	181
TMCC	123	425	669	1,119	2,336
WNCC	60	108	206	310	684
TOTAL	235	634	971	1,551	3,391

*Duplicate count if credit earned at more than one community college.

FALL 1997 UNLV UNDERGRADUATE STUDENTS
WITH TRANSFER CREDIT FROM UCCSN COMMUNITY COLLEGES*
(Headcount)

COMMUNITY COLLEGE	UNLV FRESHMEN	UNLV SOPHOMORES	UNLV JUNIORS	UNLV SENIORS	TOTAL
CCSN	404	820	1147	2,222	4,593
GBC	6	5	16	25	52
TMCC	5	24	31	57	117
WNCC	7	4	8	13	32
TOTAL	422	853	1,202	2,317	4,794

*Duplicate count if credit earned at more than one community college.

A significant percentage of the total undergraduate students at the university, particularly at the senior level, have completed work at Nevada community colleges. At UNR, 55 percent of seniors have UCCSN transfer credit. At UNLV, 44 percent of seniors have UCCSN transfer credit. The percentage of all university undergraduate students who have transferred credit from a UCCSN community college is 33 percent at UNLV and 40 percent at UNR. It is clear that our academic programs have to be designed to ensure that these large number of students who attend multiple UCCSN institutions receive a quality education.

PERCENTAGE OF FALL 1997 UNDERGRADUATE STUDENTS
WITH TRANSFER CREDIT FROM UCCSN COMMUNITY COLLEGES*
(Headcount)

INSTITUTION	UNDERGRADUATE STUDENTS	STUDENTS WITH NV TRANSFER CREDIT	PERCENTAGE OF STUDENTS
UNLV	14,704	4,794	32.60 %
UNR	8,428	3,391	40.23 %
TOTAL UCCSN	23,132	8,185	35.38 %

* Student numbers based upon Fall 1997 state-supported headcount enrollments.

PERCENTAGE OF FALL 1997 STUDENTS WITH TRANSFER CREDIT
FROM UCCSN COMMUNITY COLLEGES, BY LEVEL*
(Headcount)

	FRESHMEN	SOPHOMORES	JUNIORS	SENIORS	TOTAL
UNLV	13.24%	30.04%	40.39%	44.27%	33.67%
UNR	11.47%	37.08%	52.57%	54.96%	40.23%
TOTAL	12.55%	32.68%	45.05%	48.01%	36.11%

*Student data by class level based upon IPEDS Fall Enrollment Survey 1997 which accounts for the slight difference in the UNLV total percentage.

Another way of examining the transfer patterns of Nevada students is to look at only the new students admitted to the universities each fall. For fall 1997, the following numbers of students who are newly admitted and have transfer credit are reported.

FALL 1997 NEW UNR UNDERGRADUATE STUDENTS
WITH TRANSFER CREDIT FROM UCCSN COMMUNITY COLLEGES*
(Headcount)

COMMUNITY COLLEGE	UNR FRESHMEN	UNR SOPHOMORES	UNR JUNIORS	UNR SENIORS	TOTAL
CCSN	8	13	8	2	31
GBC	5	10	3	1	19
TMCC	53	120	73	21	267

WNCC	14	45	53	5	117
TOTAL	80	188	137	29	434

*Duplicate count if credit earned at more than one community college.

FALL 1997 NEW UNLV UNDERGRADUATE STUDENTS
WITH TRANSFER CREDIT FROM UCCSN COMMUNITY COLLEGES*
(Headcount)

COMMUNITY COLLEGE	UNLV FRESHMEN	UNLV SOPHOMORES	UNLV JUNIORS	UNLV SENIORS	TOTAL
CCSN	249	271	176	98	794
GBC	6	2	2	1	11
TMCC	3	10	6	6	25
WNCC	3	2	4	0	9
TOTAL	261	285	188	105	839

*Duplicate count if credit earned at more than one community college.

This pattern shows that students are transferring into the universities at all class levels, not just at the junior level. Most students do not complete the associate degree and then transfer at the beginning of their junior year into the university. The 1996 UCCSN transfer policy encourages the completion of the associate of arts or the associate of science degree, but this is not the most common pattern for students. Early transfers are the norm, and attention to mechanisms that deal with assisting earlier transition is essential. The guarantee of the transferability of the associate degrees is not sufficient.

GENERAL EDUCATION AND ASSOCIATE DEGREES

1996 POLICY: All campuses will achieve institution-to-institution agreements which provide that the completion of the Associate of Arts or Associate of Science degree at a UCCSN community college by a student automatically fulfills the lower-division general education requirements of UNLV and UNR.

ORIGINAL DEADLINE: AA graduates by Fall semester 1996
AS graduates by Spring semester 1997

IMPLEMENTATION: Effective fall 1997, all students with UCCSN Associate of Arts degrees were granted admission to the universities with junior status and automatically met all of the lower-division general education requirements of the universities.

For AS graduates, progress has been slower. Although the mandated date for implementation was Spring 1997, full implementation of the agreements for the AS degrees has been delayed to fall 1998. GBC, and WNCC report that they have now articulated the Associate of Science degree with UNR to meet all of the lower-division general education requirements on transfer. TMCC is still developing the general AS degree. UNLV and CCSN are working on an agreement.

Proposed policy: The completion of the Associate of Arts or Associate of Science degree at a UCCSN community college automatically fulfills the lower-division general education requirements of UNLV and UNR. Date of implementation: 1998.

The advantage of the associate degree to meet general education requirements may be outweighed by the disadvantage of getting the degree if the lower division courses in the major are not available as part of completing the associate degree. Then, the electives completed will exceed the student's needed number of electives within the baccalaureate degree.

The universities and community colleges need to develop reverse transfer agreements so that the student can transfer to the university when they have completed all of the applicable courses for their major and then transfer back to the community colleges these credits in the major and receive the associate degree.

Proposed Policy: In order to be sure that all students who start at the community college have the opportunity to complete the baccalaureate degree in the same number of credits as those who start at the university, if lower division courses required in the major are not offered by the community college, the university shall either offer the courses at the community

college or offer a reverse transfer agreement with the community college. If on a case by case basis, specific baccalaureate degrees appear unable to be articulated by either method, the UCCSN Academic and Student Affairs office shall resolve the impasse. Implementation: Fall semester 1999.

MAJOR-TO-MAJOR CONTRACTS

1996 POLICY: Campuses will implement academic discipline-based major-to-major contracts between UCCSN community colleges and universities to assure that community college students' work in the major transfers without an individually negotiated contract. To be admitted to any major, transfer students must meet the minimum grade point average required by that major.

DEADLINE: Fall 1998

IMPLEMENTATION: This goal has been met for the majority of students. These agreements are published for student use and are available at the Transfer Centers on each campus.

- UNR reports that agreements in all majors have been completed with the three northern community colleges.
- UNLV reports that agreements in all majors have been completed with all of the community colleges, except for education articulation with the three northern community colleges.

Although students no longer need individually negotiated contracts, transfer contracts are still being used by Transfer Centers with some students at the community colleges for two reasons. First, some campuses are using the contracts as information for the student and verification that the student has received information on the major-to-major agreement. Secondly, these contracts are helpful for students who may have transfer work from other institutions.

Proposed Policy: Campuses will continue to update academic discipline-based major-to-major agreements between UCCSN community colleges and universities to assure that community college students' work in the major transfers without an individually negotiated contract. These agreements will provide clear information for community college students about which courses to take to transfer efficiently to the university in each major. Information on these agreements will be available to all students in the Transfer Centers on each campus. To be admitted to any major on transfer, students must meet the minimum grade point average required by that major based on their transfer GPA. Information on majors, courses, and GPA requirements should be readily available and communicated to all students and faculty in campus publications. Date of implementation: Fall 1998.

Curricular Changes and Communication

Part of the difficulty of the major-to-major contracts is the continual need to update these agreements as requirements in the major change at the university level. Currently, each institution has included representatives of their transfer institutions on its curriculum committees. The UNLV curriculum committee has a representative from CCSN on their curriculum committee, and CCSN has a representative from UNLV on their curriculum committee. UNR has representatives from WNCC and TMCC on their curriculum committee. This joint representation is designed to keep constant information flowing from one campus to the other in advance of curriculum changes. Any curriculum change at the undergraduate level has potential to change the status of course transfer equivalency and major-to-major agreements. A change of a course from lower division to upper division or vice versa, a change in title, number, or content of a course, and the creation or deletion of a course all impact both the university and the community colleges. The continual and timely discussion of these actions is essential to protect students.

Models that Work

Two recent developments may serve as models for articulation. First, the UNR College of Engineering has worked with WNCC to hire an engineering faculty member to teach lower division courses needed in the major and has delivered courses to the WNCC campus by distance education where the campus itself has been unable to offer the courses. Second, UNLV and CCSN have worked together to hire education faculty at CCSN to offer the full lower division education program at CCSN. CCSN is creating the courses that are equivalent to the UNLV lower division courses and those will be in place by fall 1998 so that students will be able to proceed completely through the lower division courses at CCSN before

transferring to UNLV. In both instances cited above, close faculty collaboration on course content will be required to ensure compliance with program accreditation requirements.

Course Levels

Faculty in community colleges have expressed concern that some university courses placed at the upper division level prevent students from completing the course at the community college, even though the content is appropriate for the community college to offer. There are two Board of Regents' policies in place that address this concern. First, ***each university shall include in its official catalog of undergraduate courses a section stating all lower division prerequisites for each upper division specialization or major program.***[1] In establishing the required baccalaureate curriculum, university faculty must establish vertical articulation in which at least half of the student's total required courses fall at the lower division level, so that a UCCSN transfer student can complete the bachelor's degree in the same timeline as native university students. Board policy also states that ***lower division credit may be granted for lower division courses from other institutions, which are comparable to university upper division courses.***[2] Under this policy, community college courses that are equivalent in content to upper division university courses can be accepted as equivalent to the upper division course, but they still "count as lower division." It is recommended that this Board policy be dropped and that the transfer course "count" as the course within the university curriculum to which it is equivalent.

Proposed Policy: No UCCSN student can be required to repeat a course on transfer to the university if an equivalent course has been taken and successfully completed at the community college. (See also NRS Chapter 396.568)

Proposed Policy: All baccalaureate degrees will include at least 60 credits of lower-division requirements. Date of implementation: Fall 1999.

Proposed Policy: Drop the following language from the Handbook: "Lower division credit may be granted for lower division courses from other institutions, which are comparable to university upper division courses."

Transfer GPA

One other topic misunderstood by transferring students is the "transfer grade point average." This transfer GPA (calculated by the university) will differ from the community college grade point average if non-baccalaureate courses are included in the community college GPA. Campuses need to clarify for students the circumstances under which GPA changes will occur. As university campuses implement the Baccalaureate of Applied Science degree in fall 1999, the transfer GPA for that degree will be more likely not to vary from the community college GPA.

TIMELINE FOR COMPLETION OF DEGREE

1996 POLICY: Make certain that students transferring from UCCSN community colleges to the universities with the AA or AS degree, as juniors, will be able to complete the bachelor's degree in the same timeline as native university students, assuming: (1) That the community colleges are able to offer all the courses necessary to allow community college students comparability with students who begin at the universities; (2) That students will need to have completed all lower division requirements in the major, and if not met, such requirements will need to be satisfied at the universities.

IMPLEMENTATION: With the completion of major-to-major agreements, the use of the Associate of Arts and Associate Science degrees to meet general education lower division requirements, and the availability of reverse transfer agreements, students will be able to graduate in the same timeline whether they enter at the community college or at the university. If students receive and use degree information and do not change majors, they will be able to proceed through the baccalaureate degree at the same pace. One key piece of this smooth transition is an assurance of continuing financial assistance. It is important to communicate to students that there does not have to be an interruption in their financial assistance.

Proposed Policy: Students at the community college who plan to transfer to the university in the next semester and have applied for admission are eligible to apply for financial aid and scholarships at the university.

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[1] Chapter 14, Section 12.3
[2] Chapter 14, Section 11.1.c

DEGREE AUDIT RECORD SYSTEM

1996 POLICY: In order to improve student advisement, a Degree Audit program which enables the evaluation of student transcripts and course requirements by computer will be implemented statewide as soon as possible with a target date of Fall Semester, 1997.

IMPLEMENTATION: Although the target date has come and gone, DARS is still not completely in place. UNLV completed the DARS programs for the Colleges of Hotel Administration, Business, and the Student Development Center in fall 1997. DARS programs for the Colleges of Engineering, Liberal Arts, and Education are scheduled to be completed by summer of 1998. DARS programs for the Colleges of Fine Arts and Extended studies are scheduled to be completed by fall 1999. At UNR, all academic programs do not yet have a completed DARS update to the 1998 catalog, but this process is underway. The original programming was for either the 1995 catalog or the 1997 catalog. TMCC and CCSN report that DARS is functional and being used by their faculty and counselors. GBC is in the testing stages, and WNCC is still in the development stages of coding data.

This delay in the full implementation of a Degree Audit program for students, first at the universities and then at the community colleges, is extremely unfortunate. This is one way in which students get accurate information about degree requirements and should help improve transfer in two ways. First, UCCSN community college students would be able to compare their courses with the requirements of either university. Second, they can identify those courses they need to take to graduate with a baccalaureate degree in a particular major.

Proposed Policy: A DARS system for all students at the universities must be complete by fall 1999.

TRANSFERABILITY OF BUSINESS COURSES

A special concern in the 1996 Regents Transfer Initiative was the problem that students majoring in business were having with transfer. The Board directed the Inter-institutional Articulation Committee to *assist the university business deans and their appropriate community college counterparts in working toward improved transferability of business courses from the community colleges to the universities through a special study of business programs at both types of institutions.*

A 2 + 2 business degree (based on an Associate of Business) has been articulated between UNLV and CCSN and was approved at the Board of Regents meeting in April 1997. Students at CCSN now have the ability to complete the baccalaureate in an accredited business program within the four-year timeline by starting at the community college.

Slower progress has been made at UNR. The College of Business at UNR and TMCC have agreed on a 2+ 2 agreement that still needs to come forward for Board of Regents' approval this summer or fall. Further work on making sure that all lower division work of the associate degree transfers into the major and that the student can complete the baccalaureate degree in the same timeline is still underway. Major-to-major agreements in business are in place between UNR and GBC and WNCC.

Proposed Policy: Major-to-major agreements in business will be completed in fall 1998. A final report to the Board of Regents by the Colleges of Business is required by December 1998.

LEGISLATIVE MANDATE

Testimony from students about frustration with transfer resulted in the passage in the 1997 legislature of AB 468, which amended NRS Chapter 396.568 follows:

> *In accordance with the policy of the board of regents, all credits earned by a student in a course at a community college within the system must be accepted and applied toward the coursework required of the student in his major, if applicable, or other coursework required of the student, for the award of a baccalaureate degree upon graduation of the student from any university within the system if the catalog for the community college:*

1. *Designates the course as transferable by the system;*
2. *Identifies the course by the same title as the equivalent required course offered at a university; and*
3. *Contains the same description for the course as the equivalent required course offered at a university.*

This legislation is congruent with current practice reflected in the UCCSN Transfer Guide, which lists individual courses at the community colleges along with their university equivalent. However, this legislative message has served as a reminder to the campuses of the importance of course-to-course transfer and making sure that courses that appear the same are indeed transferable. If courses exist at UCCSN community colleges and universities that have the same title or the same description and are not equivalent, then the institutions must make the content of the courses equivalent or change the title and description so that students will not make a reasonable assumption that the courses are the same. Equally important is that the community college catalog give accurate information to students. Each university and community college campus has been asked to review and edit their catalogs and schedules to ensure that all courses are accurately identified for students. Additionally, clear reference to transfer policies to other UCCSN institutions must be reflected in every institution's catalog.

The Transfer Guide is a tool for students and advisors to choose particular courses if decisions must be made beyond the major-to-major agreements. The major-to-major agreements supercede the course-by-course articulation reflected in the Transfer Guide. The system office no longer maintains the Master Course File. The Transfer Guide will be web-based by September 1998. This change should result in a Transfer Guide that is more accessible and attractive for students' use. In the Transfer Guide, courses are listed with their equivalent university course or as an elective, if there is no equivalent university course. Electives count toward graduation requirements for the baccalaureate degree, but do not meet specific requirements in the major. According to Regents policy, ***all baccalaureate-level courses are transferable. In general, a baccalaureate course is one that is commonly offered by a regionally accredited four-year institution as being applicable toward a bachelor's degree.***[3] All baccalaureate-level courses are transferable to the universities as either electives or as a specific course and count toward the baccalaureate degree credit requirements.

RECOMMENDATION FOR NEW INITIATIVES

In summary, within the University and Community College System of Nevada, students may begin either at the community college or at the university and have the same number of "credits to degree." All students are responsible for taking the courses required in the major they are pursuing. If they change majors, it is likely that they will have to take additional credits to meet the requirements of the new major, regardless of where they enter the higher education system.

Both the universities and the community colleges have responsibilities if transfer is to be smooth for students. These responsibilities will be spelled out clearly by the Interinstitutional Articulation Committee (members of the Articulation Board and the Academic Affairs Council) and communicated to the Board of Regents and the campuses. Likewise, students have responsibilities, as well as transfer rights, and need to have both clearly defined by the Interinstitutional Articulation Committee.

To communicate more effectively, a UCCSN brochure and www site will be published by fall 1998 that outlines the transfer process and the protections given to baccalaureate degree-seeking students who enter the system at the community college. Designed for students, parents, faculty and legislators, this publication will explain the transfer process and a transfer student's "Bill of Rights." Phone numbers for each campus Transfer Center will be given where a student can go for assistance.

A written report will come to the Board of Regents in November 1998 from 1) each campus on progress made on each of transfer policies and practices addressed in this report and 2) the Interinstitutional Articulation Committee on progress made on effective communication to students.

[3] Chapter 14, Section 13.2